

*Review*

**MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

---

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S  
REPORT FOR 1958**



The Registrar General's figure for the population of the town is 7,450, this being the same figure as for 1957. The figure for 1956 was 7,430. It is propable that during the summer holidays this figure is more than doubled. The seasonal increase usually commences in June and continues until September. There are also minor variations at Easter and Christmas. The large majority of the hotels, boarding houses and apartments close down for the winter months.

WATER SUPPLY.

The water supply of Minehead is a very valuable asset to the health of the town. As most of you will remember, it was achieved after much discussion and in face of considerable opposition. Like all water supplies that are not spring fed it is drawn from a very extensive catchment area that is not immune from contamination. Although the supply is more than adequate in quantity it is subject to those contaminations inseparable from this type of water. The degree of contamination is variable and at times almost absent, and it is for this reason that it has been deemed safe to chlorinate all waters before being issued for human consumption. The accompanying table of the examination of specimens taken from widely differing parts of the supply demonstrates this.

RAW WATER				TREATED AFTER GOING INTO SUPPLY			
BACTERIOLOGICAL		CHEMICAL		BACTERIOLOGICAL		CHEMICAL	
Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory	Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory	Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory	Satis- factory	Unsatis- factory
21	27	8	1	23	2	—	—

The water is supplied to the public direct from the mains, either direct to the houses or by means of standpipes. It will be seen from the accompanying table the manner of its distribution.

	DIRECT TO THE HOUSES			BY MEANS OF STANDPIPES		
	Public	Water Companies	Private	Public	Water Companies	Private
Number of Dwelling Houses ... ..	2,520	—	58	15	—	—
Population ... ..	7,145	—	261	44	—	—

During the year under discussion the question of taking over the water supply owned by Mr. Luttrell, which supplied a number of houses on the southern slopes of the North Hill, came before the Council. In this connection in December I was asked to prepare a report on the supply and my opinion as to the utility of the water to the Minehead Urban District Council from a health point of view for submission to the Ministry.

In my report, after giving a short discussion of the terrain affected and the various sources of the water, I summed up as follows :—

“ During the many years that I have been Medical Officer of Health to the Minehead Urban District Council there have been very few complaints from the owners supplied by these undertakings and those of a minor nature. No epidemics have been traced to them and only occasional shortages have been reported. As for its suitability for human consumption in its untreated state the answer should be in the negative in view of the variability of the bacteriological reports. The increasing seasonal summer population and the greater accessibility of the surrounding hills, in which the catchment areas lie, will see an increasing risk of surface contamination, which will be undoubtedly detrimental to the quality of the water.”

I closed with the opinion that the water supply would be a useful acquisition to the Minehead water undertaking, but should not be released for household consumption until after chlorination.

The acquisition of this undertaking was subsequently approved by you at an approximate cost of £5,238, inclusive of improvement works.

The following extensions or improvements of supply were carried out during the year :—

Link-up of Broadwood and Longwood supplies to Staunton Reservoir.

Link-up between Alcombe and Turnhill Lea.

Complaints are frequently being received as to the discolouration of the water from taps in the houses. It has been explained that this discolouration has been examined and found to consist of suspended matter and rust deposit in the mains. It is quite harmless.

SWIMMING POOLS.

There is one Swimming Pool situated on the sea front, which is privately owned. This pool is filled with sea water which undergoes chlorination before being admitted to the pool. The filtration and chlorination plant are under skilled management, and the engineer is on duty the whole of the time the bath is in operation. Frequent testing indicated that the water carried the necessary amount of residual chlorine to ensure a safe bathing water. Samples submitted from time to time were all found to be satisfactory.

The efficiency of the management of the Swimming Pool and the condition of the bathing water have at no time given rise to any anxiety.

SEWAGE.

In dealing with this matter in my report for 1957 I reported “that your Council was dealing with this matter and I gather it is still *sub judice*.” In my report for the year 1958 I have still to draw attention to the fact that the disposal of sewage and storm water is once again still *sub judice*. It may be pointed out that it is not my duty to criticise the methods adopted by the Council in dealing with this matter, but it is certainly within my province to draw attention to those matters which affect adversely the health of the town.

Your deliberations on this matter extend over a period of years, and during that period it is not to be expected that the original condition has improved. If there was urgency then there is more urgency now. The *status in quo* has been put in a few words thus—Minehead has grown rapidly, but the sewerage system, though adequate for its purpose when it was planned, has not extended *pari passu* and is now inadequate. With the further growth of the town the demand on the sewerage system will increase, and existing conditions, unless dealt with, will worsen.

In my last report I dealt briefly with the question of beach pollution, and on previous occasions have dealt with the question of flooding in the lower parts of the town during heavy rain with a mixture of crude sewage and storm water. These are very obvious signs that all is not well with the sewerage disposal. All the evidence concerning these matters has been and is still before you. I will not weary you with further reiterations. I will, however, express a pious hope that in the next annual report the words “*fait accompli*” will be substituted for “*sub judice*.”

MEAT AND OTHER FOODS

Meat is prepared for human food at the Minehead Abattoir, from where it is distributed throughout the districts of Minehead, Watchet, and Williton. So far as is practical all animals are inspected before slaughter and all carcasses and offal are inspected in accordance with instructions laid down in Memo. 62 Foods, and appropriate action taken where required.

All places where food is prepared, &c., including the Abattoir, shops, stalls and vehicles, are inspected from time to time and action taken as required. Generally the cleanliness of these establishments and vehicles is satisfactory.

A list of premises used in this context in alphabetical order follows :—

Bakehouses ... ..	3	Dairy Shops ... ..	3
Bakers' Shops ... ..	4	Fishmongers ... ..	4
Butchers ... ..	8	Fried Fish Shops ... ..	2
Cafés ... ..	19	Fruiterers and Greengrocers	9
Chemists ... ..	5	Grocers ... ..	31
Clubs, &c. ... ..	13	Hostels ... ..	1
Canteens ... ..	2	Hotels with Restaurants ...	11
Church Halls ... ..	6	Hotels, Residential ... ..	43
Confectioners ... ..	8	Licensed Premises ... ..	9
Dairies ... ..	1	Pie Factory ... ..	1

The number of inspections given to these premises was 581 during the year.

The care, cleanliness and compliance with the Food Hygiene Regulations of these premises was found to be satisfactory.

No prosecutions were made during the year.

The method of disposal of such food as is condemned is by burning. No large quantities of food were dealt with.



# MEAT INSPECTION, 1958

## CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED

Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part during year :—

	Cattle excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed (if known) ...	535	87	130	3,442	1,304
Number inspected ... ..	535	87	130	3,442	1,304
<i>All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci :</i>					
Whole carcases condemned ...	—	—	2	2	2
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	11	19	—	30	28
Percentage of the number in- spected affected with disease other than tuberculosis and cisticerci ... ..	2.0	21.8	1.5	0.9	2.3
<i>Tuberculosis only :</i>					
Whole carcases condemned ...	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	3	2	—	—	29
Percentage of the number in- spected affected with tuber- culosis ... ..	0.6	0.2	—	—	2.2
<i>Cysticercosis :</i>					
Carcase of which some part or organ was condemned...	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases submitted to treat- ment by refrigeration ...	—	—	—	—	—
Generalised and totally con- demned ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Weight of meat condemned (in lbs.) for :</i>	ALL ANIMALS				
(a) Tuberculosis ... ..	517				
(b) Cysticercosis ... ..	—				
(c) Other ... ..	1,383				
Total (in lbs.) condemned ...	1,900				

## MILK.

The milk supply during the year was satisfactorily maintained. Samples taken from time to time that did not come up to the required standard were investigated and the cause ascertained and remedied.

- (a) The total number of Registered Distributors was five.
- (b) The total number of Registered Dairy Premises was one.
- (c) The number of Licenced Dealers of Designated Milk was five.
- (d) The number of supplementary licences issued to Distributors whose dairy is outside this area was one.

MANUFACTURE OF ICE CREAM.

The regulations governing this manufacture and the requirements implicit in them have tended to restrict the preparation of ice cream to the large wholesale houses. The distributors find it more profitable to purchase their ice cream in bulk.

The number of Premises registered for :—

Manufacture and retail	...	8	(one only manufacturing)
Manufacture only	...	0	
Retail only	...	47	

HOUSING.

The total number of houses is 2,593. During the year 25 houses were erected by private enterprise. There were no houses erected by the Local Authority. Nine houses were in course of erection by private enterprise at the close of the year.

The total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year was approximately 118. There was one case of overcrowding.

The number of Post War houses erected up to the 31st December, 1958, was :—

By Local Authority	...	226
By private enterprise	...	153

IMPROVEMENT GRANTS MADE UNDER THE HOUSING ACT, 1949-1954

Number of applications and houses dealt with by the Local Authority :—

	Received		Approved		Rejected	
	Appli- cations	No. of Dwellings	Appli- cations	No. of Dwellings	Appli- cations	No. of Dwellings
31. 7.49 } 31.12.57 } During year	15 2	16 5	14 2	14 5	1 —	2 —
Total ... 31. 7.49 } 31.12.58 }	17	21	16	19	1	2

FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 and 1948.

Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Public Health Inspector) :—

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	12	6	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	56	53	-	-
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises)	-	-	-	-
Total	68	59		

Cases in which defects were found :—

	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of cleanliness, Overcrowding, Inadequate Ventilation, Sanitary Conveniences ...	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Out-work ... ..)	2	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ...	2	—	—	—	—

Number of out-workers in August list required by Section 110(1) (c) Wearing Apparel, 4.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The year 1958 is not distinguished by any serious outbreaks of any of the specific fevers. Sporadic cases of Scarlet Fever and Measles occurred during the year, but not in sufficient numbers to justify the use of the word epidemic. Seven cases of Scarlet Fever were notified, but these were all of a mild type. Six cases of measles were notified.

Cases requiring institutional isolation are sent to Taunton Isolation Hospital.

Disinfection of premises after infectious disease is carried out by the Local Authority, also after cases of an unhygienic or unpleasant nature on receipt of a written request from the General Practitioner in attendance.

### TUBERCULOSIS.

There were three cases of Tuberculosis notified. There were no deaths.

### HOSPITAL.

The Minehead and West Somerset Hospital is entirely administered by the Bridgwater, Minehead and Butleigh Management Committee.

Local representation in the management of the Hospital exists in the House Committee of the Hospital, on which the town is represented. This Committee is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of the Institution and is empowered to make recommendations and representations to the Committee of Management. The Committee of Management is represented on the Committee by three of its members.

### AMBULANCE SERVICE.

The Transport Service for Minehead and District is carried out by the St. John Ambulance Brigade from the Minehead St. John Ambulance Brigade Headquarters under Station Officer E. S. Lamb. Three ambulances and two sitting case cars are based on the Headquarters. The Station Officer has six full-time ambulance drivers under his supervision. Night work and week-end duties are undertaken with the assistance of the voluntary drivers. The Minehead Nursing Division supplies the Nursing personnel for all journeys in which a nurse is required.

To demonstrate the work performed from the Minehead Headquarters and its personnel, I have appended the following figures :—

Miles travelled ... ..	...	...	81,920
Journeys performed ... ..	...	...	3,120
Patients conveyed ... ..	...	...	9,007
Accidents ... ..	...	...	67

### CLINICS.

Clinics, with the exception of Infant Welfare, are now held at the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital.



VITAL STATISTICS.

		Total	M.	F.
Live Births—Legitimate ...	...	73	39	34
Illegitimate	...	2	0	2
Live birth rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population 10.67				
		Total	M.	F.
Stillbirths—Legitimate ...	...	4	2	2

Stillbirth rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births ... 50.63.  
Deaths of infants under one year of age :—1 (one week).

Death rate of Infants per 1,000 live births ... 13.3.

		Total	M.	F.
Deaths ...	...	121	68	53

Death rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population ... 16.24.

An analysis of the vital statistics shows that the total deaths registered were 121 ; in 1957 the number was 104.

The total of live births was 75 compared with 67 the previous year.

With regard to the deaths occurring in age groups, 21 occurred between 60 and 70 ; 86 occurred over the age of 70, and of these, 41 occurred between 70 and 80; 36 between 80 and 90, and 9 at 90 or over. It would seem that of the 121 deaths only 35 failed to reach the three score years and ten.

Consideration of the causes of deaths shows that 60 deaths resulted from diseases of the circulatory system ; the figure for the previous year being 63.

Of these 60 deaths, lesions of the coronary vessels of the heart number 19, and vascular lesions of the nervous system 21. There were 11 deaths due to respiratory disease. The total number of deaths from malignant disease was 30 compared with 21 the previous year.

The report that I have presented to you for the year 1958 shows little evidence of the climatic difficulties under which the country has laboured. Cold, wet and lack of sunshine are its principal characteristics. One would have expected more evidence in the sickness and in the number of deaths. True, the number of deaths is increased, but only by 17, a difference which might have occurred in more normal years without comment.

Infectious diseases, on the whole, showed a decrease on the previous year, which is a matter for satisfaction since considering the inclement weather which largely prevailed.

The town's water supply, as I have already indicated, is a matter for satisfaction and the acquisition of further supplies has a great potential value for the future and it will be satisfactory to have the North Hill included in your water undertakings and under the control of your Surveyor.

Your Public Health Inspector reports satisfactorily on those premises and vehicles dealing with the food and its supply to the community.

One case of overcrowding was investigated by your Public Health Inspector and satisfactorily dealt with.

The services dealing with sickness and accidents have worked smoothly and satisfactorily to the satisfaction of those concerned. It is hoped that the Transport Service will be able to continue its efficient service to the general public as it has done in the past.

The Hospital and the Nursing services, as usual, have maintained their excellent traditions.

The Voluntary Services have all worked satisfactorily to maintain the smoothly working whole.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to the Council for their courtesy and consideration and to my colleagues in their service for their help and consideration in all those matters concerning the health of the community.

W. BAIN, M.B., B.S., Lond.,  
Medical Officer of Health.  
Brook House, Minehead.  
Telephone : Minehead 19.

June, 1959.

